

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #0045/01 0081418
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 081418Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9922
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 4827
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 1426
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 5258
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5633
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4859
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3291
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5633
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2470
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0695
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 9416
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 6909
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1856
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5919
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7917
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0747
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1151
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000045

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Gaza Operation and Diplomatic Corollary

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that this morning an IDF officer was killed by anti-tank missile in Gaza.

HaQaretz and other media reported that Israel's three top cabinet ministers cannot agree on the best way to end the military operation

in Gaza: PM Ehud Olmert and DM Ehud Barak want to reach a deal, with the help of the U.S. and Egypt, which will guarantee long-term quiet in the south and keep Hamas from getting stronger. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni prefers to end the operation now, without an agreement. Israel Radio found that various reports on the matter are confusing.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday DM Barak ordered the IDF to get ready for a significant expansion of its activities in Gaza, which would focus on bringing reserve forces into the enclave. The preparations for the next phase of Operation Cast Lead are underway as the government considers Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's cease-fire proposal. HaQaretz quoted political sources in Jerusalem as saying that the decision of whether to expand the Gaza operation will be made over the next few days. Media reported that the political-security cabinet decided yesterday that military activity will remain at its current level and humanitarian aid to Gaza residents will be expanded. HaQaretz reported that reserve units called up on Sunday are due to complete their preparatory training today. The media reported that the IDF is focusing its raids on the Philadelphia Corridor. The Jerusalem Post cited the belief of the defense establishment that Hamas is still capable of launching a QqualityQ terror attack against Israel, infiltrating the country through tunnels it has dug along the border.

Major media reported that Amos Gilad, who heads the Defense Ministry's political-security bureau, is due to go to Cairo today to discuss producing new security arrangements that would end weapons smuggling from Sinai to Gaza. HaQaretz and other media reported that Israel is refusing to discuss the diplomatic elements of the Mubarak proposal, like opening border crossings and advancing the dialogue between Hamas and the PA. HaQaretz said that this is why the government has chosen to send Gilad, a security official rather than a diplomat, as its representative. HaQaretz and Israel Radio reported that notwithstanding a series of statements suggesting that there is agreement for a cease-fire, it appears that there are still significant differences between Israel and Egypt regarding the nature of the settlement. The main problem is the fact that Israel is preconditioning a cease-fire to a solution to the smuggling, while Egypt is asking for a cease-fire and the opening of the border crossings, before a resolution of the Hamas tunnels issue. Maariv quoted senior Israeli sources as saying that if Egypt achieves an agreement that will prevent smuggling, Israel will stop the operation. HaQaretz reported that the U.S. is also involved in the discussions between Israel and Egypt on an agreement that would seek to end smuggling into Gaza. The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice extended her stay in New York as she continues her efforts to reach a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. HaQaretz reported that Arab sources have said that Israel and the U.S. are discussing possible security arrangements that could be used on the Philadelphia Corridor, and that in parallel Washington is discussing with Cairo how such arrangements may be implemented. HaQaretz also reported that Israel proposed to the U.S. and the EU that a settlement be constructed from a series of accords "against Hamas" that would be imposed on the group by the international community. The U.S. began talks with Egypt on the matter, and a few days ago French President Nicolas Sarkozy also became involved. At this point Israel opted to avoid direct talks with Egypt, leaving the coordination to Washington and Paris.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying that Hamas will not agree to any cease-fire that contains provisions that would stop smuggling weaponry into Gaza and that even the deployment of U.S. military engineers along the border would likely be incapable of stopping the smuggling. The newspaper quoted Hamas officials as saying yesterday that Hamas rejected an Egyptian proposal to place the Rafah border crossing under forces loyal to PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Hamas also rejected an Egyptian proposal to deploy international troops in Gaza in the context of a new cease-fire agreement with Israel. Israel Radio quoted the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper as saying that Mubarak invited PM Olmert to meet with him in order to discuss the Egyptian initiative for a cease-fire in Gaza. The item said that Olmert said that he would come to Egypt after the security cabinet met. Israel Radio reported that talks are also underway for a meeting between Olmert and PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, who will meet with President Mubarak

in Cairo on Saturday. According to Al-Hayat, Egypt has rejected out of hand any proposal to station an international force in its

territory in order to prevent smuggling to the Gaza Strip, but it is willing to discuss the subject of the tunnels because they violate its sovereignty.

Israel Radio reported that two Katyusha rockets landed this morning in the area of the northern town of Nahariya -- one of them on an old-age home. The radio reported that Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command might be responsible for the attacks. The organization later denied being behind the launchings. A few Israelis were slightly wounded. Israel returned fire. Israel Radio reported that a Palestinian unsuccessfully tried to set a petrol station in Mishor Adumim -- on the Jerusalem-Jericho road -- on fire. He was killed.

All media reported that the IDF stopped the fighting for three hours yesterday to allow the passage of a humanitarian convoy to Gaza.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday senior IDF officers expressed doubt over whether military efforts alone could bring regime change in Gaza, and said the army is far from achieving optimal conditions in the Strip to implement an exit strategy.

Major media cited a report filed yesterday by State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss stating that, three-and-a-half years after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, two-thirds of the 8,500 evacuees are still living in temporary housing sites, and that the move-in date for their permanent housing is still far off.

HaQaretz quoted sources in the Israeli defense establishment as saying that Hamas's military wing wants to continue fighting despite its heavy losses. Based on this evaluation, it is believed the Hamas military wing will not agree to a move that includes a cease-fire in which the Egyptians would pledge to work to stop arms smuggling from Sinai to the Gaza Strip. HaQaretz and Maariv reported that Hamas is taking advantage of the fighting to eliminate Fatah men and collaborators with Israel.

Leading media quoted UN Relief and Works Agency representatives as saying yesterday that they are 99.9% certain that gunmen did not fire from a UN school in Gaza that was shelled by the IDF on Tuesday, and that it called for an independent investigation. The media reported that the IDF maintained its position that a number of mortar shells were fired at IDF units from within the Jabalya school.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, former head of IDF Intelligence's research division, told diplomats and foreign correspondents in Jerusalem that Iran has reason to be satisfied with the conflict in Gaza as it draws attention away from the country's nuclear program.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Yossi Levy, Foreign Ministry spokesman for the Hebrew media, as saying in a statement: "Israel will continue to defend itself from its enemies, including Hamas and Iran, with whom Venezuela has close ties. It is no surprise that Venezuela has again shown the world what side it is on."

Yesterday the Arabic-language Kull-Al-Arab newspaper quoted Minister Eli Yishai (Shas) as saying during his morale-boosting visit to southern Israel that Israel has to show how strong and capable it is in bringing down Hamas's rule in Gaza. Yishai was quoted as saying that Israel must demolish Gaza from the ground, destroy thousands of houses, and only then will Hamas understand that Israel will never tolerate any more Qassam rockets.

Maariv reported that politicians might delay the February elections in Israel by six weeks to two months if the operation continues.

HaQaretz, Yediot, and The Jerusalem Post reported that the conservative Website pjtv.com has recruited Joe Wurzelbacher, a.k.a. "Joe the Plumber," as a war correspondent who will explain to his viewers why Israeli forces are mounting attacks against Hamas.

Gaza Operation and Diplomatic Corollary:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QThe Egyptian-French-American initiative gives politicians leverage to stop the IDF's advance in dense urban areas of Gaza, and to stop the rocket fire on Israeli communities that led the cabinet to decide on the operation.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QIf a cease-fire is in the offing, Israel needs to be very clear about what it expects from such a temporary cessation of hostilities.... The cabinet must not lose sight of the fact that the goal of this operation was not a cease-fire, but to stop Hamas terror.

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QIsrael has won, but the moment of victory could be the most dangerous in the entire campaign, since in the heat of success one can move forward more and more, and want more, and thereby lose everything.

Journalist and far-Left peace activist Uri Avnery wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QSabra and Shatila are already happening now on the outskirts of Gaza.

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: QIsrael has clarified that it will not agree to a toothless cease-fire, in which the enemy would simultaneously continue to prepare for the continuation of the war.

Block Quotes:

II. "A Welcome Initiative"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (1/8): QThe international initiative for a cease-fire in Gaza has many fathers: foreign ministers, prime ministers and three presidents -- Hosni Mubarak, Nicolas Sarkozy, and George W. Bush. Of them all, Egypt's Mubarak is the most essential in any agreement.... It is best to view Mubarak's initiative as a positive introduction on the way to a converging of the wills and needs of the parties involved in the fighting. Israel demands, and rightfully so, an end to the firing of rockets and their replenishment. Hamas wants more than anything else to maintain its rule in Gaza and satisfy the people's yearnings, first and foremost for the opening of the crossings. Only a formulation that satisfies the needs of both sides has a chance of lasting. The Egyptian-French-American initiative gives politicians leverage to stop the IDF's advance in dense urban areas of Gaza, and to stop the rocket fire on Israeli communities that led the cabinet to decide on the operation.

II. "IsraelQs Terms"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/8):

QWe have consistently argued that Israel cannot tolerate the existence of a hostile regime between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. Hamas stands as the antithesis of the two-state solution -- the quintessential enemy of reconciliation. The prospects of cutting a deal with relative Palestinian moderates like Mahmoud Abbas are improbable so long as Hamas remains in power.... So if a cease-fire is in the offing, Israel needs to be very clear about what it expects from such a temporary cessation of hostilities. It must also adhere to the larger strategy of asphyxiating Hamas in the fullness of time. For now, Israel must insist that: the smuggling of weapons, munitions, terrorists, and contraband via tunnels below the Philadelphi Corridor not be allowed to resume ... the security reality must be changed. The purpose of the IDF operation was to deter Hamas from attacking. If the Palestinians violate the cease-fire by firing, tunneling, smuggling or manufacturing weapons, Israel must enjoy the freedom to retaliate, and in a timely fashion; prior to implementing any cease-fire, Gilad Shalit must be freed in exchange for Hamas gunmen taken in the current operation ... the mandate for any international forces that would police the crossing points explicitly should give them the kind of enforcement authority that earlier EU Qmonitors lacked. If not, their presence would be meaningless and Israel

should oppose permanent opening of the crossings. The cabinet must not lose sight of the fact that the goal of this operation was not a cease-fire, but to stop Hamas terror.

III. "Dangerous Victory"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/8): QNo one in the Arab world will now be able to say that Israel is weak and begging for its life, as in the Hamas play with the figure of Gilad Shalit. The images of the past two weeks have been imprinted for years, and HamasQs bravado and arrogance have gone into the tunnels along with their frightened leaders. The lesson has been learned, and now comes the turn of the diplomatic battle, which will be no less difficult than the military battle. The IDF must deploy on GazaQs border, tighten the pressure, which includes not supplying fuel, continue the aerial bombings and refrain from contact with civilians, since the enemy will try to exact a toll of casualties from us by terrorist means and tip the scales of victory. Israel has won, but the moment of victory could be the most dangerous in the entire campaign, since in the heat of success one can move forward more and more, and want more, and thereby lose everything. We must be careful not to bite off more than we can chew. The moment when one stops is the moment that remains in peopleQs consciousness, and this is that moment. We have won, and now we should capitalize on the success. How? First of all, beware of dangerous Qbrokers,Q such as the Egyptians and the Turks.... We should not make use of Egypt on the topic of Gaza, since they are also an interested party. They have a clear interest in keeping Gaza ours after the operation.... What are IsraelQs minimum conditions from which we must not diverge? That the crossings between Israel and Gaza become a border and no longer be opened, since the weakened Hamas will continue to rule Gaza, and Hamas is IsraelQs enemy. Never before in world history has a country fed its enemies. That a UNIFIL-like force be sent to Gaza, which will number at least 15,000 soldiers and deploy through the entire Gaza Strip, as in southern Lebanon. This will be the worldQs way of supervising what is going on in this dangerous region.

IV. "Sabra and Shatila 2009"

Journalist and far-Left peace activist Uri Avnery wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/8): QAfter this war started a reliable poll showed that 20% of the [Israeli] public are opposed to the war in general and that 20% are opposed to a ground operation. It would be hard to assess what public opinion wants now.... To say the truth, Sabra and Shatila are already happening now on the outskirts of Gaza, as an innocent civilian population is being QmincedQ Q- pay attention to the word Q- by planes, artillery boats, and tanks, from the land, the sea, and the air. But the [Israeli] public does not see this, since the media, which is mostly enlisted and guided, turns a blind eye to the events that can be watched on Al-JazeeraQs round the clock broadcasts, and because [IsraelQs] military correspondents are covering the war from a safe distance.

IV. QA Final Status or the Continuation of the War

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (1/8): QIsrael has clarified that it will not agree to a toothless cease-fire, in which the enemy would simultaneously continue to prepare for the continuation of the war. Israel conditions its acceptance of the cease-fire on the complete disarming of the enemy, while establishing civilian Palestinian rule in Gaza, headed by Abu Mazen. Israel believes that this is the only way to stop the threat of war in the region. Until the establishment of the new civilian reality the IDF must remain on new lines in Gaza during an interim period to follow up the regime transition from Hamas to Abu Mazen or another agreed upon civilian regime.... In the mean time we are in a stage of clarifications. At this time we are obligated to continue the task we started Q- beating the enemy. We must remember that the war is continuing, even as talks towards a cease-fire are being held.

CUNNINGHAM